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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PRISTINA 000457

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USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WISNER TELLS KOSOVO ALBANIANS THEIR  
WORK IS JUST BEGINNING

REF: (A) PRISTINA 437 (B) BELGRADE 817

Classified By: CDA Lynn Gurian for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. During a May 21-23 visit to Kosovo, Special Representative Frank Wisner starkly disabused Kosovo Albanian leaders of any notion that Kosovo independence can be considered a foregone conclusion. In plain-speaking meetings, Ambassador Wisner told the president, prime minister, and opposition leaders individually and collectively that their final status negotiating team has to perform better in Vienna and in the new shuttle phase of discussions on decentralization. To expressions of concern that international community resolve to determine Kosovo's final status in 2006 may be weakening, Ambassador Wisner offered assurances that the USG remains committed to concluding the process this year. He said the USG sees three keys to realizing that goal, all held by the Kosovo Albanian leaders -- enhanced flexibility and generosity in the talks themselves, renewed commitment to implementing the Standards for Kosovo program, and continued efforts at interethnic reconciliation. Ambassador Wisner and UNMIK principals agreed that a recent KFOR pullback from Kosovo's north is regrettable and complicates efforts to engage the Kosovo Serb population there. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Ambassador Frank Wisner, The Secretary's Special Representative for Kosovo Final Status Talks, visited Kosovo May 21-23. In Pristina, Ambassador Wisner met separately with President Fatmir Sejdiu, Prime Minister Agim Ceku, opposition leader Hashim Thaci and COM KFOR Commander General Guiseppe Valotto. He met collectively with the Kosovo Albanian final status negotiating team (Sejdiu, Ceku, Thaci, Sejdiu senior advisor Skender Hyseni, opposition leader Veton Surroi, and team coordinator Blerim Shala). Deputy Prime Minister/Local Government Minister Lutfi Haziri and opposition leader Ylber Hysa joined Ambassador Wisner at a COM-hosted dinner. The ambassador also met in Pristina with COMKFOR Giuseppe Valotto, Principal Deputy SRSG Steve Schook, Mitrovica area UNMIK representative (and former FSO) Jerry Gallucci, Kosovo Serb leaders Oliver Ivanovic, Goran Bogdanovic, and Randjel Nojkic, and non-Serb minority leaders Sadik Idrizi, Mahir Yagcilar, Dzezair Murati, and Haxhi

Mergja. He visited Kosovo Serb returnees as well as Albanian and Serb community leaders in the village of Bablak, south of Pristina. Finally he visited USKFOR Camp Bondsteel where he met with Commanding General Darren Owens and Romanian military officer Stefan Iovanescu. COM participated in all meetings and discussions.

Wisner to Selected Kosovo Albanian Leaders: You Aren't Home Free

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13. (C) Ambassador Wisner straightforwardly laid out his primary message for Kosovo Albanian leaders in a private dinner discussion with Prime Minister Ceku, Deputy Prime Minister Haziri, and opposition figure (and cultural heritage Vienna talks delegation leader) Ylber Hysa. Wisner said, "Your team didn't do very well" in the most recent meetings on decentralization with UN Deputy Special Envoy Albert Rohan. "You got bogged down on details of municipalities and read from a script rather than engage." The ambassador made clear that this kind of performance would not get Kosovo to the final status outcome Pristina negotiators want, saying, "The train may have left the station, but could fail to reach the destination called independence." He said the USG wants to see not only an improved performance in Vienna but also a renewed Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) commitment to implementing the "Standards for Kosovo" program on the Kosovo ground.

14. (C) The Kosovo Albanian leaders absorbed these messages. Haziri, who led the Pristina delegations to three of the four Vienna sessions on decentralization, reacted a bit

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defensively, claiming that Pristina's proposal would leave 80 percent of Kosovo Serbs living in Serb-majority municipalities and that the Belgrade proposal included "strange" elements that would create municipalities without inhabitants, leave 54 percent of Kosovo's territory (including most resource-rich areas) under Kosovo Serb control, and create "ethnic corridors" to Serbia in much the same way late Serbian Prime Minister Djindjic had proposed three years ago. Ceku alleged that Serbian President Kostinica is aiming to create a Serb "entity" in Kosovo using ethnically-based decentralization and broad patriarchal territorial carve outs as tools. In urging a more flexible and generous approach in Vienna, Wisner assured the Kosovo Albanian leaders that the USG would not allow Serbia to control Kosovo territory under a municipal guise or to control Kosovo's natural resources. Wisner reassured the Kosovo Albanian leaders that the USG would resist in the strongest way any functional or territorial carve-out for Serbia.

15. (C) Ambassador Wisner repeatedly urged the Kosovo Albanian leaders to know their "red lines" delineating truly unacceptable proposals and to share them with the USG and the team of United Nations Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. Ceku immediately replied that he and his colleagues share two overriding fears -- that the international community (especially the U.S.) was beginning to talk about a delay that would carry the talks into 2007 and that some corners of the international community were again contemplating "conditional" independence for Kosovo. He said the Pristina team could be much more flexible in the negotiations if the international community issued a clear signal on independence. Wisner replied, "I can't give you that -- we need a partnership to get to the end," to which Ceku said that Pristina negotiators could be more flexible in Vienna, even in the face of rising public anxiety in Kosovo, if they came to the negotiating table confident that the talks were on track for conclusion in 2006. Wisner assured him that the USG "is absolutely determined to stick with the process we have in place and determined to conclude the process in 2006."

16. (C) Ambassador Wisner opened his meeting with the collected Kosovo Albanian final status negotiating team by praising the ongoing minority outreach efforts of team members, especially President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Ceku, saying, "I know these efforts are tough, that not all Kosovo Albanians approve of forming friendships with Serbs." Wisner especially praised Sejdiu's Easter visit to Decani monastery and visits to Serb enclaves in Peja/Pec and Decan/i municipalities and encouraged Sejdiu to communicate to his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) mayors to do the same as examples of "humane leadership" (NOTE: The LDK holds the mayorship of 19 of Kosovo's 30 municipalities. END NOTE.).

17. (C) Wisner then renewed his call for flexibility in the negotiations and for "laying your cards on the table." He said, "there are two reasons for not holding back: the more you are forward-leaning, the more the UN will be able to put together a final proposal in keeping with your goals; and the more you hold back, the more room you create for Belgrade to maneuver." Referring to a Government of Serbia letter to Contact Group ministers suggesting significant changes in the format of the status talks (ref B), Ambassador Wisner said that we are seeing the first public signs that Serbian officials are becoming uneasy with the negotiations because "it must be increasingly obvious to Belgrade where the negotiations will end." He said the USG "expects (the talks) to end in independence in 2006, but the outcome is not inevitable -- it will take work."

18. (C) Prime Minister Ceku appreciated Wisner's reiteration of the 2006 goal for final status determination, especially

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in the face of what he sees as Belgrade's emerging blocking strategy. Blerim Shala said the Pristina negotiators are fully prepared to be flexible on decentralization, particularly on the basis of Ahtisaari's criteria for creation of new municipalities which he listed as "sustainability, functionality, feasibility, and rationality." Ceku said the PISG would likewise attempt to exhibit greater flexibility regarding Standards implementation, especially by accepting as fully as possible the Contact Group's proposed 13 priority actions. Wisner said "moral support" from Kosovo Albanian leaders is needed over the next months for doing "everything Kosovo's limited financial means allow you to do, to give us the tools we need to work with." He then listed illustrative action items: resolving property issues; creating a public bus system for Kosovo's ethnic Serbs to feel connected across municipal boundaries; passing important legislation (on religious freedom, preservation of cultural heritage, and language use); concluding financial audit of PISG officials; creating an anti-corruption commission; and setting up public, transparent bidding on construction projects. Acknowledging that the next round of talks will focus on economic issues, Sejdiu asked for help in making available international financial institution data regarding Kosovo.

Thaci: Staking Out The Fringe

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19. (C) In an incoherent but mercifully brief private meeting with Ambassador Wisner, opposition leader Hashim Thaci inadvertently gave evidence of the internal challenges faced by leaders of the Kosovo Albanian negotiating team. Alleging that he remains on the team "for the sake of Kosovo and the international community," Thaci said his steadfastness "puts my life in jeopardy." The U.S., he said, should not want the "yes" men currently in authority to create weak and corrupt structures which will present a security risk for Kosovo post final status. Ambassador Wisner implored Thaci to focus on

occupying a constructive place on the negotiating team, to appeal to the mayors of his political party to continue multi-ethnic outreach in their municipalities, and to concentrate on those domestic issues which could become problematic because "the international community is watching and deciding whether or not Kosovo is equipped to assume its own sovereignty."

#### Kosovo Serb Leaders Would Like to Lead

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¶10. (C) Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) leaders Goran Bogdanovic, Randjel Nojkic and Oliver Ivanovic told Ambassador Wisner that Belgrade should recognize decentralization as a crucial mechanism for keeping Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo instead of seeing it as a bargaining tool. Ivanovic said the SLKM will soon send its own proposal on decentralization to Belgrade and, if there is no response, will forward it to Ahtisaari, UNMIK, and to Wisner's office.

Bogdanovic and Ivanovic described the SLKM proposal as maximizing the number of Kosovo Serbs living in Serb-majority municipalities and transferring to municipalities a greater number of governing competencies, including social affairs, primary health and education, public utilities, land ownership/property administration and local police and courts, as well as some influence over privatizations.

#### Internationals Concerned About Northern Kosovo

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¶11. (C) Several interlocutors expressed concern about recent events in northern Kosovo. PDSRSG Steve Schook (formerly COMKFOR chief of staff) acknowledged that a French KFOR withdrawal of fixed checkpoints from the area north of the Ibar River greatly concerns him, especially as final status talks progress and the Serb majority in northern Kosovo likely becomes increasingly agitated over prospects of an independent Kosovo. COMKFOR Giuseppe Valotto later told Wisner he is aware of the potential problems created by the

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French pull-back and has plans to raise KFOR's profile in the north.

¶12. (C) Schook and Ceku, in separate meetings, both said the PISG would ideally be increasing outreach efforts in the north as the talks progressed -- perhaps channeling funds thru UNMIK, which is a generally more acceptable funding source than the PISG for northern Kosovo Serbs. Schook and UNMIK representative for northern Kosovo Jerry Gallucci agreed with Ambassador Wisner that such UNMIK and PISG outreach to northern Kosovo Serbs, complemented by international community assistance programs, is essential to building pragmatic links across the ethnic divide roughly delineated by the Ibar. All contacts, though, were likewise aware of a need to avoid exacerbating that divide by funding programs that could inadvertently discourage displaced Serbs in the north from returning to their homes elsewhere in Kosovo as circumstances otherwise warrant.

¶13. (SBU) Ambassador Wisner cleared on this message. USOP clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.  
GURIAN